



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

LATE

February 12, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Dee Morikawa, Chair
Committee on Human Services

FROM: Rachael Wong, DrPH, Director

SUBJECT: **H.B. 1347 – RELATING TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Hearing: Thursday, February 12, 2015, 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 329, State Capitol

PURPOSE: The purposes of H.B. 1347 is to appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services to increase staff, improve systems and contract for necessary services related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the intent of this measure and appreciates the Legislature's continued support of the DHS's Benefit, Employment, and Support Services Division (BESSD), and BESSD's efforts in administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The DHS has requested funding for staffing and modernization efforts to improve on its administration of the SNAP Program through the Executive Budget. We ask for the Legislature's support of the Executive Budget request.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this bill.



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Testimony of Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Supporting HB 1347 Relating to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Scheduled for Hearing Thursday, February 12, 2015, 10:00 AM, Room 329

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is a nonprofit law firm created to advocate on behalf of low-income individuals and families in Hawai'i on legal and policy issues of statewide importance. Our core mission is to help our clients access to the resources and fair treatment they need to realize their opportunities for self-achievement and economic security.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **strong support** of Senate Bill 192, which would appropriate funds to the Department of Human Services for the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including appropriations for any necessary staff increases, improving electronic systems to streamline processing, and SNAP outreach.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is the largest food assistance program, with benefits entirely funded by the federal government, which also covers half of administrative and outreach costs. Food assistance is of particular importance in Hawai'i, where the cost of food almost 60 percent above the national average—the highest in the country. As one of the most effective public assistance programs, SNAP helps families make ends meet. Extensive research shows that SNAP reduces food insecurity and improves health outcomes. SNAP also benefits our entire community—the program improves nutrition for struggling families while also stimulating our economy as benefits are spent at local retailers. Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates \$9 in total community spending. It also supports local agriculture, as an increasing number of farmers and open markets are accepting SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer cards, helping low income families access fresh fruits and vegetables. Maximizing participation and smooth administration of SNAP also helps reduce the strain on over-burdened emergency food banks.

The Department of Human Services has recognized major improvements in its SNAP program, including timely processing of applications. Hawai'i Appleseed supports any necessary DHS funding to help maintain this progress, make additional improvements, and increase participation in the program through outreach.

Again, thank you for an opportunity to testify in **strong support** of HB 1347 to help ensure that the Department of Human Services has the resources to ensure that all eligible families participate in SNAP.